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SUBJECT: Ecuador's Position Towards the upcoming Copenhagen Climate Change Negotiations

REF: QUITO 937

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Ecuadorian Government will continue to support G-77 positions related to climate change at the upcoming COP-15 in Copenhagen. According to Ambassador Federico Meneses, Director General for the Environment at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ecuador has placed adaptation to environmental change on the same level as mitigation and intends to treat the two equally. From a small developing country viewpoint, Meneses views adaptation as being much more important than mitigation. In Copenhagen, the GoE will encourage a voluntary and transparent transfer of technology from Annex I countries, as well as the creation of a sustainable financing mechanism to address adaptation and other needs in the developing world. Although Ecuador intends to promote its Yasuni-ITT project (ref A) in Copenhagen, the GoE does not expect serious support to materialize. End Summary.

Adaptation as Important as Mitigation

¶2. (SBU) Econoff met with Ambassador Federico Meneses, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Director General for the Environment, on November 23 to discuss Ecuador's positions at the upcoming Convention of the Parties-15 (COP-15) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations in Copenhagen. According to Meneses, the Government of Ecuador (GoE) will continue largely to support the G-77/China positions that have been laid out in the meetings leading up to Copenhagen. Ecuador supports emissions reductions by developed countries of 40% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 95% below 1990 levels by 2040. The GoE sees emission targets for small developing countries as of little use, and will not support small country targets. Meneses noted that Ecuador, a small polluter currently and historically, will treat adaptation and mitigation as equally important. Realistically, adaptation is more important to Ecuador itself. The reality of climate change will affect Ecuador long before any of Ecuador's conservation measures make any difference to global climate change.

¶3. (SBU) With a focus on what Ecuador needs in order to adapt to ongoing and expected climate change, Meneses said the most important outcome from Copenhagen would be an agreement on the transparent, verifiable, and voluntary transfer of green technology from the developed world to assist developing countries' adaptation (and mitigation) efforts. Also crucial is a long-term and sustainable funding source to help underwrite technology transfer and other necessary actions by countries in the developing world. Meneses criticized the current Global Environmental Facility (GEF) as being too complex, unrealistic, and not delivering assistance where it was needed. (Ecuador is receiving funds from the GEF for two projects at the moment, a regional program with Bolivia and

Peru focused on glacier retreat, and another dealing with coastal adaptation to climate change.)

Doing Our Bit

¶4. (SBU) Meneses did not totally ignore Ecuador's mitigation efforts, pointing out initiatives such as the USAID-supported Socio Bosque program, which seeks to protect existing forest and reforest denuded land, a similar program to protect the high-altitude paramo, a move to generate 100% of the Galapagos Islands energy needs from renewable sources, and, of course, the Yasuni-ITT initiative (ref A). Meneses hopes that one of the Yasuni initiative's main constraints - that it is not Kyoto compliant - might be at least partially overcome if the Copenhagen conference agrees on a mechanism allowing carbon credits for protecting forests. Meneses described the Yasuni-ITT initiative as a small country's attempt to make a difference in slowing climate change and in protecting a mega-diverse area. A number of contacts in the Ministry for the Environment, including the Director General for Climate Change, Carolina Zambrano, have low expectations for Yasuni-ITT at Copenhagen, noting that it will be mentioned but not emphasized by the delegation.

¶5. (SBU) Although Meneses expressed understanding for the

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limits placed on U.S. negotiators by domestic political realities, he stressed the need for the U.S. to take a leadership role in pushing for a successful outcome to climate change negotiations. While the GoE does not expect a comprehensive agreement from Copenhagen, it hopes for solid progress. Meneses cautioned that there was likely to be a divide between his assessment of Ecuador's position, which included references to Ecuador's own difficulties in dealing with pollution and climate change, and the rhetoric of President Correa, which had a more political thrust.

Comment

¶6. (SBU) Ecuador is strengthening its internal support for managing climate change. On December 1 the Undersecretariat for Climate Change was created within the Ministry of the Environment, which is tasked with the lead on all national and international policy on climate change. For Copenhagen, Ecuador will likely let the G-77 lead, and focus GoE efforts on exploring the possibility of coordinating the Yasuni-ITT initiative with future UN REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) developments and supporting the development of financing for REDD projects.
HODGES